

Pope, Charles

Incidents connected with  
Ottawa city ...



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CONNECTED WITH

# OTTAWA CITY

AND VICINITY.

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CHAS. POPE.

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OTTAWA :

PRINTED BY HUNTER, ROSE & COMPANY.

1868.



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## P R E F A C E .

Some of the following pages recently appeared in the columns of the *Ottawa Times* ; and in reproducing them in the present revised form, the writer is but fulfilling his promise to many of the old inhabitants who naturally cherish, with a lively interest, reminiscences of the past.

OTTAWA, 14th August, 1868.

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# INCIDENTS

CONNECTED WITH

## CITY OF OTTAWA.

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### ARTICLE I.

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#### BRIDGES AND GENERAL ITEMS.

THESE are interesting incidents connected with almost every village, town and city, which, although not generally known, are nevertheless worth recording; and it is with this view that the writer has placed himself in communication with some of the oldest inhabitants of Ottawa, who have from memory, kindly enabled him to lay the following before the reader. At a later period some very amusing anecdotes may be given; but as the parties concerned are still living, it would not be considered wise to have all the play to ourselves. In the meantime, the first bridge over the Ottawa may occupy our attention, and whose *modus operandi* will serve to recall to mind the persevering spider alluded to in history. It appears

that until the autumn of 1826 the present capital was a wilderness, when Lord Dalhousie, Colonel Danford, Colonel By, and several other gentlemen arrived at Hull for the purpose of deliberating on the proposed construction of the Rideau Canal. They assembled on a rock near the northerly end of the present Union Suspension Bridge, with the view of considering the propriety of first constructing a bridge over the Ottawa, which would facilitate operations on the Canal. They then retired to the house of Squire Philemon Wright, and finally came to the conclusion to commence the bridge immediately. Two days afterwards operations were begun—carpenters, masons, and quarry men being hired on the spot. The centres for the first arch nearest Hull were soon put up, and in a few weeks the rubble stone arch was completed; but on taking out the centres the whole arch gave way and fell. Nothing daunted, however, another attempt was made, and with the experience of the past, centres were built and the arch constructed in the same locality. The arch was composed of dry hammered stone, without mortar, and it remained perfect after the removal of the centres. The second arch was built by Philemon Wright and Sons, under contract: thus the workmen were enabled to commence building the bridge over the main channel—a very difficult task in those days.

In order to obtain communication with the opposite bank, Captain Asterbrooks, of the Artillery, took one of the brass cannon down to the rocks near where the end of the bridge would naturally be, so as to fire off a rope across the channel—240 feet wide—to Chaudière Island. For the first trial a half inch rope was used; but the force of the powder cut it. The experiment was repeated, but with the same result. It was then suggested by one of the workmen to try an inch rope, which was approved, and on its being carried out was found successful; for it was landed a hundred feet on the island. Having secured it at both ends, the workmen were enabled to haul over larger ones.

A trestle ten feet high was then erected on each side of the channel, and two ropes stretched across over the tops of these trestles, and fastened at each end to the rocks; the ropes were allowed to be slack in order to have greater strength,

The next step was to have a foot passage to allow the workmen to communicate with each other; and with this object the ropes were placed four feet apart, and properly planked over. A rope hand-rail on each side, made the crossing perfectly easy. Chains were then placed across over trestles in a similar manner, and planked on the top, until the planking from each shore reached within ten feet of joining in the middle,

when the chains broke and precipitated the workmen and tools into the channel. Three men were drowned, and the others swam ashore. This checked further progress for a short time. A scow, about one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, was then built, and anchored to a point of rock where the bridge was to be located. Stronger trestles, made of heavy timber, were erected, and two eight-inch cables procured and laid across the channel over these trestles, and properly secured to the rocks at each end. Then the building of a wooden bridge was commenced, in accordance with a plan approved by Colonel By. The work progressed very favorably, and with the assistance of screw-jacks, placed on the scow below it, was kept up to its proper level. In the course of the summer the bridge was brought nearly to completion, when the prevalence of a gale caused the whole structure to turn over up stream, against the wind. The two cables, before mentioned, held it until they were chopped off with axes, notwithstanding the great force of the current; and thus "the whole affair moved majestically down the stream" as far as the present entrance of the Rideau Canal. This caused, of course, another delay. It is related of Mr. Drummond, the chief workman, that he shed tears at this unlucky event.

The next move was to build another bridge on

the same plan. On this occasion two large chains were employed, made of one and three quarter inch round iron, in links of ten inches long, which were put over the trestles, and in the same place that the rope cables were removed from, having been secured like the former to the rocks on each side of the channel. The mode of constructing this work was similar to the preceding, save that the scow below was dispensed with, as the chains were sufficiently strong to support the whole fabric.

After a delay of some months, the bridge was finally completed, and stood the travel for about 12 years, when it too followed in the wake of its predecessors. The channel being once more left without a span, communication was had by means of ferriage until 1843, when the present magnificent structure was commenced, which is now an ornament to the capital.

A word or two about Pooley's Bridge, and we are done with bridge building. In 1827, Lieut. Pooley was ordered by Colonel By to build a bridge over what is commonly called the "gully," which intersects the road leading from the Suspension Bridge to the city. It was wholly built and covered with round timber, and was so *unique* in its appearance, that on seeing it the Colonel exclaimed: "Well! well! we must christen that *thing* Pooley's Bridge." It is therefore



unnecessary to say that the present structure built on the same site bears the name of "Pooley's Bridge."

Having thus far treated of engineering matters, the reader would, doubtless, prefer a change; consequently an anecdote may not be out of place.

Among the contractors for the works on the canal alluded to was an American, named Findland, who was to have built a lock and dam at Hogsback; but owing to some misunderstanding the contract was not completed. Determined to have satisfaction from Colonel By, he shortly afterwards invested in a span of horses and handsome sleigh, which were procured in the States. On the vehicle were painted a spread eagle and lion, the beak of the former being in the eyes of the latter. It is said the Colonel survived this manifestation of ire on the part of the discomfited contractor.

It must not be supposed that our pioneers were without their seasons of enjoyment, for in 1830 Colonel By gave a ball, on which occasion an ox was properly prepared and roasted *whole*. It was then placed in a field in a standing posture, and when the dance and song had ceased the guests proceeded to study its anatomy. This jubilee was probably the celebration of the completion of the first eight locks of the canal.


The Scotch are entitled to the palm for having erected the first church, which was called St. Andrew's, and is situated on Wellington Street. The Reverend John Cruikshank was the first who preached from its pulpit. The building has since been enlarged.

The first school was built in 1832 by Mr. Perkins, on his own property. The teacher was a Miss Knapp, an American, who commenced with twenty pupils. This school-room was subsequently used as the court house for trying small cases, the Commissioners being Messrs. Fisher and O'Connor; Dr. Christie was clerk of the court, and was also the first medical gentleman who established himself in Ottawa.

The first steamboat that arrived at Ottawa was called the *Union*, and was built at Hawkesbury in the winter of 1821 and 1822, for the purpose of conveying the supplies for the canal. Speed in those days was somewhat different from what it is now, as the reader will perceive on being told that two trips per week between Ottawa and Hawkesbury were all that could be had. This vessel was commanded by Captain Grant, who superintended her construction, and who also inspected the building of the first steamer that ran from Du Chene Lake to the Chats Rapids.

As regards the fourth estate, it appears the first

newspaper, the *Bytown Gazette*, was published by James Johnston, in the house at present occupied by Wm. Letimer, shoemaker, on the corner of Wellington and Bank streets. On the easterly gable of this building, and therefore looking in the direction of the Public Buildings, may be seen a representation of a pair of spectacles. The only reason assigned for this rather uncommon architectural appendage is, that the individual who placed them there was "very eccentric."





## ARTICLE II.

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### THE SHINERS.

**F**OR some years after the completion of the Rideau Canal the inhabitants were troubled with a class of people in their midst known by the euphonious *soubriquet* of "Shiners," better understood at the present day as *rowdies*.

A feud sprang up between some Irishmen and Canadians, and the flame thus kindled was soon fanned into alarming proportions; so much so that Captain Baker, a retired artillery officer, and chief magistrate at the time, was compelled to order the people to arm and patrol the streets. The duties of the Captain were certainly not of an envious character, for on him mainly rested the responsibility of quelling it by military interference, or tempering matters in such a way as to allow the ill feeling to die out quietly. The course he adopted was one of prudence; and his persuasive arguments did more towards the accomplishment of the desired end than a volley of bullets.

As an instance of the lawlessness of the times,

it appears the house of Mr. James Johnston was fired at, but the occupant escaped unhurt; he was then assaulted on the Sappers' Bridge and saved himself by jumping over its westerly side near the arch. The snow was very deep, and he sank in it to such a depth as to be incapable of extricating himself. While in this dilemma, a large stone on the edge of the precipice caught the eye of his assailants, which they attempted to hurl upon him, and in this manner to put an end to his life; but it being firmly frozen to the bank they were unable to carry out their murderous intention for the moment. Foiled again in their object they resolved to surround him and complete the work; but the timely interference of friends not only thwarted them but finally succeeded in rescuing him altogether. Three of the gang were afterwards arrested and punished according to their deserts.

Mr. Johnston, it is thought, followed no particular calling, and consequently having much spare time at his disposal, philanthropically employed it in endeavoring to pacify the conflicting parties; but in so doing unfortunately made himself obnoxious—probably because he was too officious. He was, however, subsequently rewarded by being elected a member of the Provincial Parliament.

At Hogsback a family were driven out of their

house and a keg of powder rolled in, for the purpose of blowing it up. The first match failed to accomplish its object; and the second one was anxiously watched by the Shiner who sat on the window-sill, straddle legs. The result was beyond his most sanguine expectations; for his involuntary aërial excursion, without the aid of a balloon, caused much mirth among his friends, who could not but admire his abrupt and undignified descent.

There was a large number of shanties or cabins in the vicinity of the Lay By—then called Cork Town, in consequence of there being none but Irish families living there. The heads of these were canal laborers, and were not characterized for inordinate love of peace or order. As a proof of this, Father M——— deemed it necessary to pay frequent visits for the double purpose of catechising and chiding his flock. On one occasion his appearance was discovered before he had time to reach the cabin of an old female delinquent, who cried out most lustily: “By the Holy Mary, here’s Father M———.” She then made for the window; but so hurried was her attempt to escape, that not only did she effect it but took the window-sash with her round her neck. This anecdote was frequently related by the reverend gentleman, whose risible faculties were always excited at its recollection.


It is related of a woman who, in addition to selling milk, made a daily practice of begging money and provisions. The old dame inhabited a "sand hole," at the door of which her cows were accustomed to wait to be milked. So successful was her mendacity, coupled with the proceeds of sale of her provisions, that in three years she and her family returned to the old country with the sum of eleven hundred pounds.

It is said of Colonel By, the commanding officer of the Royal Sappers and Miners, that he was not exempt from insult. It must be borne in mind that the position of the Colonel frequently brought him in contact with the people, some of whom, as may be supposed, were not the most refined or gentlemanly; and the discharge of his duties, therefore, may not always have been characterized for surplus forbearance. He was the object of spite when opportunity offered, as will be seen by the fact that he was one day accosted by a rowdy, who asked him to *go up the river as his cook*. A reply, unmilitary but justifiable under the circumstances, gave the interrogator to understand that such a situation was not desired.

At a later period matters took the form of religious strife, when catholics and protestants opposed each other, and acts of ruffianism and outrage where the order of the day. It became

a necessity for peaceable individuals when invited to a little *re-union* to first possess themselves of a brace of pistols, as night was the favorite time for disturbance.

This state of things continued until 1845, when reason took the place of mob-law; the Shiners learned sense, and as a natural sequence peace and order were restored. It is pleasing to add that the city has ever since been comparatively free from crime.



## ARTICLE III.

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### AMUSEMENTS AND PASTIMES.

**H**AVING, in the previous article, described the spirit of ruffianism and party faction that prevailed among the lower orders of the community during its infancy, it is grateful to the feelings to turn over the leaf, and recount some of the peaceful and happy scenes indulged in by the citizens of eighteen hundred and sixty-eight.

There is, probably, no place in Canada where the people enter with so much zest into the spirit of pic-nics, as in Ottawa. During the summer season this delightful and healthful recreation is participated in by all classes of the community, from the little family social to the numerously attended excursions of public institutions and societies; the surplus proceeds of these latter often exceed the sanguine expectations of their projectors, and thus aid materially the praiseworthy objects for which they were organized.

Among the places of favorite resort for small parties, when the depth of water will permit, Brigham's Creek stands pre-eminent, its propin-



quity to the city rendering it accessible in a short time. Once there, one feels as far from business with its concomitant noisy waggons and dusty streets, as though he were miles from the capital. Private grounds, the Bellevue Gardens at Hull, and the many villages dotting the shore between Ottawa and Grenville, also afford cooling shelter from the scorching rays of the midsummer sun. The banks of the Ottawa are justly admired for their beauty and rich foliage, sloping and undulating back ground, groves, bays, creeks and rivulets; the variety is pleasing, and it is not, therefore, surprising that so many avail themselves of a sail in the *Queen*, to embrace what is so easily attainable. In addition to the facilities offered by the steamer, it cannot be said there is a paucity in the city of small craft, such as buns or flat boats, skiffs, shallops and even bark canoes. The first mentioned, however, are admirably adapted to the requirements of a family, possessing, as they do, ample room and a neatly scalloped awning.

The amusements and pastimes indulged in by the votaries of sylvan retreats consist in the usual emptying of well-filled baskets, containing the customary delicious morsels and refreshing beverages; fishing, archery, the various games incidental to minds bent on relaxation from the routine of every day life, and finally the "in-

evitable" lacrosse, now the recognized and established national game of the country.

There are people who take little or no interest in the above modes of enjoyment, but prefer gratifying their taste by a walk up the Richmond Road, and turning up or down the small branches leading from it; while others are again satisfied with a ramble to Rock Cliff, in New Edinburgh. Occasionally the finny tribe at Hogsback, and other points on the canal, are visited by the followers of old *Isaak*, where the capture of a mas-kinongé, weighing thirty pounds, has been known to reward them for their exertions.

When the winter season throws its mantle over the greensward, weekly penny readings, an occasional theatrical performance, skating and convivial re-unions, pass the time pleasantly. The attendance at the penny readings is sufficiently large to warrant the belief that the instruction imparted by them is fully appreciated by the audiences. As is well known they are but of recent date in this country; and New Edinburgh, although but a village, is entitled to the credit of originating them in Canada. A young lady residing in the place, Miss Neville, received a letter from a relative in England, which alluded to the success readings met with in the old country. The recipient happily thought of suggesting the subject to the Rev. T. D. Phil-



lipps, with the object of establishing one in New Edinburgh. This gentleman immediately approved the idea, and lost little time in carrying it out. It were unnecessary to say that Ottawa and many other places soon followed the example. Some of the readings in the city are given by gentlemen of known literary ability, and others who are well qualified to perform the task of *reading well*.

It will, therefore, be seen in the premises that if the capital of the Dominion does not possess all the advantages of larger cities, yet those it does present may be said to compensate to a considerable extent for their absence.



## ARTICLE IV.

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### OTTAWA THE CAPITAL.

THE fall of 1826 and that of 1867 bear a strong contrast to each other, as regards Ottawa. While in the former period we saw it a wilderness, in the latter we find it the capital, not only of the Province but of the "Dominion of Canada," with a population of over twenty thousand. When the question of placing the Seat of Government at Ottawa was first brought up in parliament, the spectators in the gallery will remember the speech of a Canadian statesman, who said: "I tell you candidly, gentlemen, you might as well send the Seat of Government to Labrador." Few would have believed that the present capital could have been so favored as it has. Yet, strange to say, there were not wanting those who, as far back as 1827, predicted that it would be what it is to-day; and Sir John Franklin and Colonel By were the prognosticators. The former gentleman declared it

on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the locks of the Rideau Canal: the remark was called forth from the latter by a Mr. Burke insisting on getting more land than the Colonel was disposed to allow him. "Sir," said the Colonel, "this land will be very valuable some day, it will be the capital of Canada." This conversation took place about fifty yards from where the fence of the Western Block of the Departmental Buildings now stands. Others are said to have made similar remarks; but it has been deemed sufficient to particularize only the above, as their professional education and experience better qualified them to form an opinion.

To return then to 1867, the Confederation of the Provinces was celebrated in the capital with becoming *éclat*, as is seen by reference to the journals of the time, access to which has enabled the writer to reproduce some of the particulars.

The first of July was the most eventful one in the history of Ottawa, for the Union was ushered in at midnight by the firing of one hundred and one guns, the kindling of a bon-fire on the Ordnance lands opposite the cathedral, the ringing of bells and the discharge of fire-works. The bon-fire was witnessed by a very large concourse of people anxious to see the display. Flags, many of which had been hoisted to their places simultaneously with the firing of the first gun at

midnight, floated from house-top, window and pole, all over the city, as well as on the Parliament and Departmental Buildings. The Queen in the morning brought in a portion of the volunteers, who proceeded to their several quarters to take breakfast, and prepared for taking their part in the parade, to fire the *feu de joie*, and march past.

At eleven o'clock the Mayor, attended by some of the aldermen and other gentlemen, with the Chaudière band, proceeded to the city hall and read the Queen's Proclamation, which was received with great applause. On the conclusion of the proceedings cheers were given for the Queen, for the New Dominion, and for the band.

A salute of seventeen guns, fired by the Field Battery from Major's Hill, announced the arrival of Lord Monck at the Departmental Buildings. According to previous announcement the Judges assembled at the Privy Council Chambers, along with the members of the extinct Canadian Government, and the ministers from the Maritime Provinces. A large number of gentlemen had previously gathered in the corridor, and anxiously awaited the opportunity to witness the ceremony of swearing in Lord Monck as the first Governor General of Canada, in its enlarged sense, according to the Union Act.

The various companies of volunteers now

began to take up position in the square in front of the Parliament Buildings to fire the *feu de joie*. The Ottawa Provisional Battalion on the right, next the 43rd Battalion Carleton Volunteers, Provisional Battalion Rifles, Cadets and Civil Service front, and P. C. O. Rifles on left. The band of the P. C. O. fourth Battalion, brought from Montreal for the purpose, played on the occasion. His Excellency then came on the ground with his staff: Lieut.-Colonel Irvine, P.A.D.C., and Lieut.-Colonel Bernard, P.A.D.C., accompanied by D. B. Godley, Esq., His Excellency's private secretary. The *feu de joie* was then fired in good style. Three hearty British cheers were given for the Queen, the band playing the national anthem; three cheers for the Dominion of Canada, and three more for the Governor General. The march past was then executed in the usual manner with great precision; after which the military were dismissed and proceeded to their quarters.

Lacrosse and cricket matches, excursions, picnics, athletic sports, promenading, dancing, swinging, singing, boat racing and all other modes of enjoyment proper were indulged in with enthusiasm. In the evening the Parliament Buildings were brilliantly illuminated, producing a very beautiful effect. The rooms of Mr. Kimber, the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, in



addition to the illumination, were prettily set off by a number of exquisite statuettes, comprising, among others, those of Her Majesty the Queen, the late Prince Consort, Jacques Cartier and others. Opposite to these, on the brow of the hill, there was a display of fire-works, provided by the city council's committee, under the direction of Mr. Nye, of Sussex street. Among these were observed the beautiful cross of Malta, the Mexican sun, the fountain, the urn, mortar batteries, Bengal lights, colored rockets, &c. The effect of these over the city was worthy of admiration. A transparency had a quaint but telling effect, *viz.*: Four links or rings interwoven, emblematic of the four united provinces, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; a garter suspended with the motto, *Quis Seperabit*. Above, was the representation of a Martello Tower surmounted with a Beaver and Union Jack; beneath, a ribbon with the motto, *Virtute Nihil Olestat*, nothing resists valor. The general effect of these transparencies was really good and the devices appropriate. Apart from the public illumination, private individuals added their share.

On Ashburnham Hill a large bon-fire, which consumed twenty-five cords of wood, was kept burning from nine o'clock till two next morning. Fire-works were also displayed, and the people

kept up dancing on an illuminated stage decked out with flags till a late hour.

And thus, in conclusion, was celebrated the most important of the

INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH OTTAWA.













